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**The Contradiction of Modernization:
A Conditional Probability Interpretation of Democratic
Transition**

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UC Tejas Room (Rm. 238)**

Abstract: Does economic development increase the chances of a country becoming a democracy? Recently, several very influential authors in political science and economics have argued that the relationship is extremely weak, spurious, or that the causal arrow is reversed. This analysis argues that a fundamental conceptual issue with how democratization is studied is responsible for their findings. Namely, economic development has a different effect on the onset and outcome of a transition. In an analysis of 284 countries from 1800 to 2004, this study finds that economic development decreases the probability of major institutional change, but increases the probability that such a transition will be towards democracy. Additional analyses suggest that this relationship is causal and not simply a proxy for inequality. This finding has several public policy implications, including how we approach international aid, loans, education exchanges, and trade with non-democratic countries. Only where a regime is so distasteful as to make effective regime change necessary in the near term should policies aimed at hurting the domestic economy be enacted. In all other cases, policy-makers will do more to promote social well-being by promoting economic development.



Note: Seminar topics are tentative.
For updated topics, seminar papers, or
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